

REMARKS

Claims 1-4, 6-21, 23-26, 28-45, 47, 48, 50, 51, 53-57, and 60-65 are pending in the present application. Claims 1-11, 20-31, and 40-65 were examined. Claims 12-19 and 32-39 are currently withdrawn. Claims 5, 22, 27, 46, 49, 52, 58, and 59 have been cancelled by amendment.

In the office action mailed February 15, 2006 (the “Office Action”), the Examiner rejected claims 1, 4, 20, 21, 24, 25, 44, 45, 48, 51, 57, and 58 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,484,268 to Tamura (the “Tamura patent”). The Examiner further rejected claim 26 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Tamura patent in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,019,153 to Cox, Jr. *et al.* (the “Cox patent”) and further rejected claim 40 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the U.S. Patent No. 6,173,432 to Harrison (the “Harrison patent”) in view of Tamura. Claim 41 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Harrison patent in view of the Tamura patent, and further in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0078294 to Tsuchida *et al.* (the “Tsuchida reference”). Claims 42 and 43 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,792,516 to Mastronarde *et al.* (the “Mastronarde patent”) in view of the Harrison patent, and further in view of the Tamura patent. Claims 2, 3, 5-11, 22, 23, 27-31, 46, 47, 49, 50, 52-56, and 59-62 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

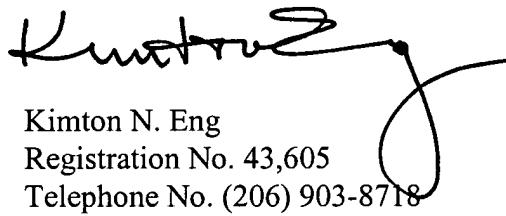
Claims 1, 21, 25, 44, 48, 51, and 57 have been amended to incorporate the limitations of allowable claims 5, 22, 27, 46, 49, 52, and 59, respectively. Claims 40 and 42 have been amended to include limitations similar to those recited in claim 1. Consequently, these claims are in condition for allowance. Dependent claims 2-4, 6-11, 23, 24, 26, 28-31, 41, 43, 45, 47, 50, 53-56, and 60-62 are similarly in condition for allowance based on their dependency from a respective allowable base claim. For the foregoing reasons, the rejection of claims 1, 4, 20, 21, 24-26, 40-45, 48, 51, 57, and 58 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) should be withdrawn.

The amendments made to claims 1, 21, 25, 40, 42, 44, 48, 51, and 57, have been made to expedite the allowance of allowable subject matter. The amendments, however, should not be interpreted as reflecting Applicants’ belief that the subject matter of the unamended claims is unpatentable, or that the Applicants have forfeited the subject matter of the unamended

claims. Moreover, Applicants have not addressed the merits of the Examiner's rejection of the claims, or whether the Examiner's characterizations of the cited references are accurate. Therefore, the presumption that Applicants have tacitly acknowledged the merit of the rejections or that the references cited by the Examiner are relevant to the patentability of the present invention should not be made.

All of the claims pending in the present application are in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and a Notice of Allowance are earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,
DORSEY & WHITNEY LLP



Kimton N. Eng
Registration No. 43,605
Telephone No. (206) 903-8718

KNE:ajs

Enclosures:

Postcard
Fee Transmittal Sheet (+ copy)

DORSEY & WHITNEY LLP
1420 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3400
Seattle, Washington 98101-4010
(206) 903-8800 (telephone)
(206) 903-8820 (fax)

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